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SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Reach for your **Dreams**

Québec

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Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Élyse Deschambault and Nathalie Duchesne, teachers at Collège Saint-Hilaire

By Colette Boucher

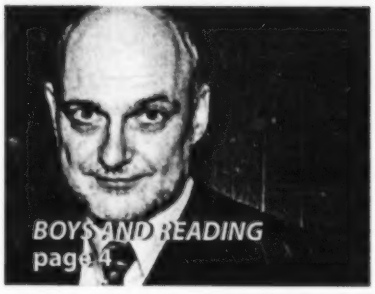
An important element of the Québec Education Program, interdisciplinary collaboration fosters broader learning, helping students weave together what they have learned. By approaching a situation from several different angles, teachers increase the chance of reaching students through their values and areas of interest, thereby increasing their motivation. While some may find this concept abstract or difficult to implement, it is accessible to everyone if they approach it by taking into account their own colleagues, school environment and learning situations. It is not necessary to launch into a huge project to apply it.

To develop learning situations that motivate young people and integrate interdisciplinary learning, Élyse Deschambault and Nathalie Duchesne, who teach English as a Second Language and History at Collège Saint-Hilaire, chose to begin with small projects. They realized that by talking to colleagues about what they were doing in their classrooms, they were able to develop stimulating activities that involved several subjects.

Meanwhile, the November 2004 training session for resource persons proposed avenues for reflection on what action to take in the educational community in order to foster learning among all students. Speakers and participants reaffirmed that student success is best supported by various means such as developing interdependency among the interventions of all school players, drawing on collective competencies and developing a reflective practice.

Schoolscapes also reports on some of the presentations given at the 32nd annual convention of SPEAQ, the Society for the Promotion of the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Québec. Among the topics that were addressed was the relation between boys and reading. Keynote speaker Paul Kropp, a popular author of books for young people and a former secondary school teacher, offered 10 suggestions for getting boys to read more.

Enjoy your reading!



By Pascale Sauvé

Concerted Actions

The November 2004 provincial training session for resource persons gave participants an opportunity to reflect together on the actions needed in the educational community, and the effects of these actions, in order to foster learning in all students.

"This meeting is significant because it emphasizes the importance of the work we have all carried out to promote student learning and success," Margaret Rioux-Dolan, the director of general education in the youth sector, told an audience of 650 participants at the opening plenary. "Learning cannot be reduced to an isolated action in the classroom," added Donald Guertin, a member of the orientation committee. "The aim of this session is therefore to generate greater awareness and understanding that this responsibility must be shared among all players."

Presentations

To provide food for thought, several presentations and workshops were on the meeting's agenda. Claude Daviau, a researcher associated with CIRADE, an interdisciplinary centre for research on learning and development in education, presented a reflective analysis on the importance of developing interdependence between players in the educational community so that actions taken have the desired effects, creating winning conditions for student learning.

What changes do educators need to make to their practices and the way they provide guidance to ensure that their actions promote student success? Three guest speakers shared their observations in a panel discussion. Louise Ménard, a teacher in the PROTIC program at Les Compagnons-de-Cartier secondary school (a program integrating information and communication technologies into teaching and learning practices), demonstrated how collective competencies can contribute to the construction of personal identity. Jocelyne Picard, education consultant for the Commission scolaire des Découvreurs, examined the role of the educational aim when planning learning activities in order to foster the success of all students, as well as its importance in one's professional actions as a means of gaining the commitment of all players to the learning process. Daniel Guay, principal of Sacré-Coeur school, shared his thoughts on managing change. What are the indicators of change? Should we adapt or imitate existing models? What tools should we equip ourselves with?

Marc Boutet, an associate professor from the Faculty of Education of the Université de Sherbrooke, gave a presentation in which he invited resource persons to observe that changing the teacher's role requires reflective practice in a learning context.

To read the presentations given by Claude Daviau and Marc Boutet (in French), visit the *Virage* Web site. **www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/virage**

Margaret Rioux-Dolan, director of general education in the youth sector

Marc Boutet, associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the Université de Sherbrooke

Claude Daviau, researcher associated with CIRADE

By Eve Krakow

Getting Boys to Read More

Paul Kropp is an author and former secondary school teacher who has written more than 50 books for young people. As a keynote speaker at the 32nd annual convention of SPEAQ (Society for the Promotion of the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Québec) in November 2004, he gave a playful, tongue-in-cheek presentation on "the boy problem" – why so many boys are doing poorly in reading – and what teachers can do about it.

Some years ago when we started doing province-wide testing in Ontario," Kropp began, "one finding that emerged quite clearly was that girls were 'out-reading' the boys." He wanted to know why. "So I did what I sometimes do when I get confused about things: I went back to Grade 3."

He separated the boys and girls into groups and asked them why they thought girls read better than boys.

The girls said there were a lot of books in the classroom that they liked. They said the boys goofed off in class, and didn't read as much. ("This is statistically true. The more you do something, the better you get at it.")

The boys said they couldn't find books they liked. They said that girls read more books, that parents read more to girls, and that "the tests are dumb." They also said they preferred sports and video games.

A few facts

The problem of boys' literacy is not new, nor is it specific to Québec or Canada. "Girls have out-achieved boys in writing for 30 years," said Kropp. Yet despite this, "men have been so advantaged for so long in so many ways. Even though we didn't read as well, or talk as well, or maybe even think as well, we still got the best jobs."

According to various studies, he continued, "boys and girls tend to be about even until Grade 2. Something goes wrong by Grade 3 or 4, and then it gets worse every year after."

There are certain things we cannot change, he said. For example, not enough dads read aloud to their kids. "If more dads did, we'd have more kids who read better. A dad is the only person who can read a page of the Canadian Tire catalogue with passion. Somehow we've got to get the message out that it's okay to read the Canadian Tire catalogue."

Kropp listed other factors that teachers can do little about: some socio-cultural groups don't value literacy; there are not enough male teachers in elementary school; there are many split families with absent dads; video games have taken over.

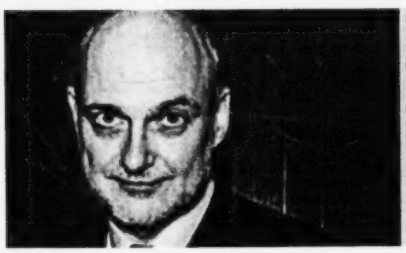
"Boy books" and "girl books"

However, he said, there are things we can change. And perhaps the biggest one is to become aware of the differences between "boy books" and "girl books." "There is no one way to be a boy," Kropp admitted. But there are certain trends.

To illustrate, he read from two very popular kids' books: *Mortimer*, by Robert Munsch, and *Franklin Fibs*, by Paulette Bourgeois. Kropp noted that whether a book is a "boy book" or a "girl book" has nothing to do with the gender of the author, but rather, the book's structure.

Mortimer is a little boy who has just been put to bed. Instead of going to sleep, he sings a loud and noisy song at the top of his lungs. Every few minutes, someone in the household comes up the stairs and into his room to tell him to be quiet: his mother, his father, his brothers and sisters, his neighbours, even the police. But he continues. So everyone gathered downstairs begins to argue about how to get Mortimer to be quiet. Meanwhile, since no one else comes into his room, Mortimer falls asleep.

In *Franklin Fibs*, Franklin (a turtle) boasts to his friends that he can swallow a hundred flies in



Paul Kropp, author of novels for young people

Paul Kropp is the author of more than fifty novels for young people. He is a popular speaker on issues related to reading and education.

one gulp. His friends ask him to prove it. Franklin makes up excuses. As the story progresses, Franklin realizes he is caught in his own lie and does not know how to get out of it without losing face. In the end, he bakes a jarful of flies into a pie, brings it to show his friends, and eats the pie in one gulp.

Kropp compared the two books. Mortimer has an aggressive stance toward his parents, the police and society. It is a story with frantic activity, noise and chaos. There is no particular moral or message. Franklin, on the other hand, looks to his parents for help. It's a more sophisticated story, with full-book plot development. The risks are social, not physical. And there is a message.

So what makes a "boy story"? Kropp sums it up with an acronym: BEAR.

- **B**oys and young men are central characters.
- **E**pisodic plot structure; continuing, cliff-hanging action.
- **A**ction is more important than language and reflection.
- **R**ebelliousness or antisocial behaviour of the hero; emphasis is on the individual. "James Bond does not assemble a team. He just goes out and does things," said Kropp. "These are the conventions of male culture. We all know that in real life this is stupid, but nonetheless, that's what we like to read."

For suggestions of books that will appeal to boys or reluctant readers, Paul Kropp invites educators to visit the following Web sites: <**www.hip-books.com**> and <**www.paulkropp.com**>.

"Take a look at the books in your classroom, using the BEAR formula. You'll find that three quarters of the books are for girls." And he speaks from his own experience.

Kropp cited another interesting statistic: in North America, only 17% of adults who purchase fiction are men, yet men and women spend the same amount of money on books. In other words, what men like is nonfiction. "What's the favourite 'boy book' of all time? *The Guinness Book of World Records*."

Ten suggestions

Kropp concluded his presentation with ten suggestions for teachers to get boys to read.

1. Make sure there are books in the classroom that boys will like.
2. Ask questions that boys will want to answer. Not "how would you feel?" but "What would you do?"
3. Go at "feelings" questions in other ways. Use graphic organizers, collect "emotional" adjectives and adverbs and ask boys to generalize on the list, or ask: "how would your friend feel if…"
4. Separate literature circles by gender for higher-level discussions.
5. Boys like to keep score—so let them. Set up contests, such as the number of pages they've read; use boggle, debates, trivia.
6. Boys like to show off. Encourage them to do so in prepared reading, reader's theatre, drama, mock TV shows.
7. Active learning. Do anything you can to get them out of their seats: drama, sketches, debates, role-playing, word wizards, etc.
8. Nonfiction.
9. Use male role models. "Not mom or dad, the language arts teacher or the librarian, but the cool young male teacher, the science, math or geography teacher—or, best of all, the coach."
10. Honour "boy" writing. "There is nothing wrong with bombs, cars and aliens," said Kropp. "Let them get it out of their systems. Eventually they will move on."

By Eve Krakow

Language assistants, student exchanges and practicums outside Québec

Language Assistants

In the **Accent** and **Odyssey** programs, language assistants in their early twenties are placed in elementary and secondary schools to help second-language teachers. Under the teacher's supervision, they carry out activities with small groups of students, encouraging them to speak and sharing their culture.

Jody Holloway, from Vancouver Island, came to work as a language assistant at a French school in Nicolet, a small town on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, in 2003-2004. She worked with various groups of students at Curé-Brassard elementary school and Jean-Nicolet secondary school. "Some of the students were resistant to learning English, so I tried to find activities that would appeal to them, to make it fun," she said. For the younger children, she incorporated music, dance and drama to make English more accessible.

She recalls how some of the younger students had never met someone who didn't speak French as their mother tongue. "With the 8-year-olds, who were just starting out, I'd try to give instructions in both languages. But my French wasn't very strong, so I had an accent and I was struggling a bit. One of the kids asked me, 'How come you're talking that way?' I had to explain."

The teachers really appreciated her presence. "They loved having me in the class," she recalled. "I'd also get feedback from the students. It was sad to leave." Holloway may have left Nicolet, but she's still in Québec: she now works at the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, one of four interns who serve as resource persons for the language assistants who come to Québec.

At the moment, there are also over 60 language assistants from England, Ireland, France and Germany in schools across Québec under the foreign language assistantship program.

Language study trips for students

For this program (found under the heading "Échanges et stages linguistiques"), the teacher or school organizes its own language exchange or study trip, in collaboration with an educational institution abroad. Among the criteria to be met, the project should involve at least 15 secondary students, and students should receive at least three hours of free classes in the target language per day, given by the Québec language teacher accompanying them on the trip.

Professional development practicums for second- and third-language teachers

This program is intended for second- and third-language teachers or for people who have to teach a language other than their mother tongue. Priority is granted to the professional development of ESL teachers.

Jody Holloway, former participant in the Odyssey program

For more information on any of the above programs, please visit the Web site of the Ministère's Direction des affaires internationales et canadiennes:
www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/DAIC

By Eve Krakow

Forum for Young Canadians

Each spring, 360 students from across Canada spend one week on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to experience firsthand how government works. No, it's not a demonstration against globalization: it's the Forum for Young Canadians.

During their week at Forum, students aged 15 to 19 are immersed in the exciting world of national politics and public affairs. Participants meet the nation's leaders, interact with decision-makers and debate contemporary issues.

Éric Desjardins, a student at the Séminaire St-François, was a Forum participant in spring 2004, while he was in Secondary IV. Janice Poirier, who participated as a student in 1996, was a Forum monitor last year. Manlú Cruz is a communications officer with Heritage Canada. The three were at the SPEAQ convention to talk about Forum and share their experiences.

Four one-week sessions are offered, bringing together 150 students each. It's a 'week of non-stop activity. Within the first few days, following a guided tour of Parliament Hill, students simulate an election. The 150 students are divided into 10 groups. They have to form parties and follow the electoral process: gather signatures, present their platform, strike alliances with other groups, etc. In his session, Desjardins was elected Prime Minister: "I had an advantage, because I am comfortable speaking both English and French. That helped me convince all the groups to vote for me," he recalls with pride.

Each day, the students learn about a different aspect of politics, through seminars and meetings with political actors: the director general of elections Canada, a Supreme Court judge, the deputy minister for Health Canada, parliamentary reporters, senators, etc. They watch Question Period from the Visitor's Gallery—an experience Desjardins really enjoyed. "When you're there, live, and you see people continually arguing and pounding on their desks, it's really quite different from watching it on TV." Students make the experience come alive in simulations of a cabinet meeting, question period and a First Ministers' Conference. The simulations take place in the actual parliamentary rooms; the students sit in the very chairs and speak into the very microphones used by the members of Parliament.

Simultaneous translation is provided at general sessions, while group meetings operate in either English or French, or in both languages where possible. At all times, students must observe the dress code: jacket and tie for the men, skirt and sweater or blazer and pants for the women.

Desjardins wants to go into politics, but that's not part of the criteria for participating in Forum. Students agree that it's an unforgettable experience, a unique chance to build friendships and learn about the concerns of people in other parts of the country. "Canada is big. When you talk with other young people, who live in the Prairies, for example, and they explain what things are like where they live, you learn a lot about your country."

For more information on who can participate and how to apply, visit the Forum Web site.
www.forum.ca

What about teachers?

Teachers can participate too! The Forum Teachers' Conference is held annually during the fourth student week in April. It gives teachers the opportunity to experience government firsthand and to enrich their teaching of Canadian history, politics and citizenship. Bursaries are available to defer some costs.

Éric Desjardins and Janice Poirier, former Forum participants, and Manlú Cruz, communications officer with Heritage Canada

By Eve Krakow

New Compulsory ELA a Model for Evaluation as

This April, for the first time in Québec, all students at the end of Elementary Cycle Three will be completing the same English Language Arts examination. Anne Doucet, Provincial Coordinator for Evaluation, explains the, benefits, challenges and underlying philosophy of the new compulsory examination.

Since 1995, the Ministère has provided complementary English Language Arts (ELA) examinations, which teachers could use for evaluation if they chose. In 2001, the Minister of Education stated there would be obligatory exams for mathematics, language of instruction, and a third subject (not yet announced). A compulsory examination for French, language of instruction, has been in place for some time. Now that the first cohort of students to have been with the reform from the beginning is graduating from elementary school, it is time for the English sector to follow suit.

Anne Doucet, Provincial Coordinator for Evaluation at the Ministère, says one of the purposes of the compulsory exam is to promote evaluation as learning. "What we hope is that the tools we present become models that teachers can then adapt, adjust, or use as a springboard for their own evaluation strategies."

The exam will also be used for a program assessment, to determine if student performances meet the requirements of the QEP. The complete, scored work of randomly selected students will be collected. "This will give us an indication of where attention should be brought—for example, what support should be provided to teachers." Doucet notes that for this kind of program verification, the samples are coded (removing any information that could be used to identify the student or the school), and are then reviewed by a team of practising teachers.

Feedback from the prototype

In June 2004, many schools administered an examination which served as a prototype for the 2005 edition. The theme was "Celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of manned flight." In developing the examination, the production team drew on its tradition of using children's literature as models of excellence for the use of language. They found a book that told the story of the Wright Brothers from the sister's point of view.

"One of the things we always have to watch in our exams is to be well aware of what will appeal and motivate," Doucet explained. The approach has to interest boys and girls, respect diversity and appeal to different learning styles. "With the theme of flight, we wanted children to wonder about why people dream of flying and being like birds."

Students had to complete a series of tasks, which included reading and responding to a variety of text types, doing research on the Internet, completing a Venn diagram to compare and contrast a video and a printed text, working in small groups to construct paper airplanes, completing a time line, writing a personal narrative, and preparing a Readers' Theatre presentation.

"The tasks were designed to activate what students already knew about the topic, to provide means for them to find out more information, and then to get them to voice an opinion or resolve a problem." A variety of

"We hope the tools we present become models that teachers can then adapt, adjust, or use as a springboard for their own evaluation strategies," said Anne Doucet.

Examination Serves as Learning

tasks were required to assess all four ELA competencies and one cross-curricular competency. "The complexity of evaluating competency calls for more than one opportunity to demonstrate one's competency."

Doucet reports that feedback from the 2004 examination was enthusiastic. "The kids were intrigued: they had hands-on, constructivist activities." For example, to perfect their paper airplanes, students kept track of their attempts in a notebook. They discussed their findings with other students, then refined their models. "We wanted to show that invention is not a one-shot deal. Also, although many scientists work alone, they draw on the work of others: this is the nature of research."

Biggest challenge: making time

The goals for the 2005 examination are the same: to encourage the student to go beyond the theme or topic that is addressed, to dig deeper or make a connection to another aspect of his or her own experience.

The unit is designed to be delivered in chunks over two weeks. Doucet hopes schools and school boards will be flexible, to allow students enough continuous time to complete the tasks. "Finding sufficient time to administer the exam in a sustained, in-depth manner remains a challenge," she admitted. "It calls for collaboration among teachers of different subjects."

In terms of marking the examinations, more and more school boards are providing time for teachers to work in small groups, she noted. "The benefit of talk and discussion around students' work is the best kind of in-service training you can give teachers."

The information document about the 2005 ELA examination can be found at:
www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/de/docinfoprim.htm

Student Comments

At the very end of the June 2004 examination, students were asked to reflect on the experience. Here is what two students wrote.

"During this unit I learned lots and lots of things.... My favourite part of this exam was the Readers Theatre, because I had never been in one and it was something really special."

"I think this was the most interesting unit and final exam that I ever did because we got to watch short videos, do group activities, and the unit lasted a while.... It kept you interested until the end, not like some units there to tire you out and just continue with sometimes no reason to continue."

The tasks are designed to activate what students already know about the topic, to provide means for them to find out more information, and then to get them to voice an opinion or resolve a problem.

Elementary Cycle Three students at Sir Eric Hamilton School (Central Quebec School Board) working on the ELA exam in June 2004.

By Pascale Sauvé

Individualized Education Plans

At Gabrielle-Roy elementary school in Boisbriand, the school team has a new way of developing and implementing the individual education plans for students with disabilities or difficulties. Emphasis is on carrying out a truly concerted approach where all players work in synergy to meet the particular needs of students and to support their success.

cole Gabrielle-Roy has 374 students, in all cycles of elementary school, including about 50 students with disabilities in five classes that offer specialized services to students with language disabilities. "We prepare an individualized education plan (IEP) for each of these students, and for about 25 other students who are integrated into the regular classes," explained Patrick Forcier, the school principal. "In all, we put together about 75 individualized education plans per year."

Two years ago, the school team had to review its process for developing IEPs. "Up until then, we'd had some release days, planned by the school board, for team planning and meetings with parents," said Forcier. "That year, we were not entitled to those days. So we had to think about how we were going to prepare the IEPs, and how we would divide up the responsibilities."

Faced with this organizational dilemma, the school team quickly found a solution. "For my part, I made the commitment to be more present and to coordinate the work," said the principal. "We still granted a few release days for meetings, which I felt was essential because there were many teachers and professionals involved in the process. Then, we decided to develop the IEPs directly with the parents."

At the end of October, the team—principal, teacher, special education teacher, remedial teacher and psychologist—met each parent, for about one hour. "I came with my laptop and wrote down everything that was said," Forcier explained. "I led the meeting and acted as secretary, so that the teachers and special education professionals could concentrate on the discussion. By the end of the meeting, we had a clear plan in hand."

The process seems to suit all parties. "It's great, because parents feel involved," he continued. "Of course, the team members talk and consult with one another before the meeting, but we don't walk in with a document already prepared and simply ask for the parents' opinion on it. It is a dynamic, friendly process carried out in collaboration with the parents. They feel that we're working together for their child, and that we are there to help each other."

Nancy Marcotte, speech therapist; Karine Chalifoux, cycle teacher for a group of students with language disabilities; Patrick Forcier, school principal; and Jacky Theriault, special education teacher

The team has spent much time debating whether students should participate in these meetings. "This practice is encouraged in the *Reference Framework*," Forcier noted. "We've discussed it as a team, but we have some reservations. We think our students are young and that their self-esteem is fragile. The topics addressed are often very delicate. When we invite students to participate, it is at the end of the meeting, so that they can give us their opinion and tell us if they agree with the means proposed. The truth is, we don't have any miracle answers. We adapt to each situation and to the needs expressed."

Realistic objectives

At these meetings, the team pools all its information about the student's situation, identifies priority needs and defines objectives. Depending on the student's age and the difficulties encountered, the objectives may be related to language, behaviour, methodology, social skills or academic achievement. "What's important is that the objectives are realistic for the student," explained Josée Théorêt, special education teacher. She then determines the measures and strategies to be implemented in order to help the student move forward. "We also try to work on the objectives in the IEP as a team," said Nancy Monette, speech therapist. "For example, if we're targeting a language objective for a student, these skills will be worked on in individual meetings, in the class with the teacher or special education teacher and at home through activities suggested to parents. When the children have opportunities to work on the objectives regularly and in everyday life, they integrate the learning more easily."

Regular follow-up of the situation is also provided. "We are constantly in contact: we talk a lot among ourselves and with parents," said Karine Charland, a core teacher for one language group. "They know they can call us at any time, and we keep them informed of any developments." In February, the team assesses the student's progress. "We also conduct evaluations as needed," added Forcier. "In special situations, the evaluation takes place earlier. Nothing says we have to wait until February; we can do it in one, two or three stages. As soon as a student has reached his or her objectives, new ones are proposed."

"My goal would be to have a record of the success of the IEPs," said Forcier. "Because sometimes the students can't meet the expectations for their cycle, but they can meet the objectives targeted in their individualized education plan. I want to be able to report on this because I believe it is valid data for showing the successes of students in difficulty, for directing our actions and for determining whether our objectives are realistic."

The results of this whole process ? "I see a big difference in the students," said Monette. "When everyone works together to support them, you see rapid changes." The time and effort invested are rewarded a thousand times over. "I am touched to see these people working so hard, to see them ready to do anything to improve the student's chances," said Forcier. "They are open and always seeking solutions to enable these young people to go further. The results are tangible! It's really magical to see the progress of a child, from age 6 to age 13. Their improvement is truly remarkable. And that's what gives us the drive to continue."

"When everyone works together to support the students, you see rapid changes," said Nancy Monette.

By Pascale Sauvé

Interdisciplinary Projects

Élyse Deschambault divides her time between developing prototypes of learning and evaluation situations in English as a Second Language at the Ministère, and her passion: teaching. In her work, she is constantly seeking new ways of doing things. Her classroom is a laboratory for experiments. "I believe that you have to make room for variety and diversity in your teaching in order to reach all students," she said. "In trying out new things, you quickly realize that young people like to participate in activities and carry out projects that they find meaningful. When students put more of themselves into their work, they become much more motivated."

Yet isn't it complicated to plan those kinds of activities and projects? "Sometimes people are scared of the idea of developing learning situations," said Deschambault. "They think it's a huge amount of work. But it can also be done simply. You just have to begin small."

In action

On this day, sitting at their desks, Deschambault's students are curious and impatient to find out what their teacher has in store for them. At her request, they each hold up a sheet of paper with notes they have taken during oral presentations on a research project on Antiquity, carried out in the context of their history class. The exercise: working as a team, the students have to create a list of the 10 most important moments or people of that period. "It's a pretext to make them speak English," she confided, "but at the same time, they're reviewing their notions of history. In a previous activity, they learned the concept of the 'top 10 list,' as well as different ways of expressing an opinion, and they did research in their history class. What's more, this concept draws on a cross-curricular competency they've already worked on: exercising critical judgment. So they are applying their learning to a different context."

Quickly and with enthusiasm, the students set to work. They discuss, argue and support their point of view. The entire activity takes place in English. Meanwhile, the teacher circulates, listening carefully to the conversations, explaining notions of grammar, and offering a few words of encouragement. She also takes notes on students' participation for evaluation purposes. "On the spot, it's quite demanding, but there's almost nothing to prepare beforehand or to correct afterward," said Deschambault. "I use what's already available. There are just two sheets to prepare: one for note-taking during the history orals, and one for the list. The students do the rest."

Élyse Deschambault (ESL teacher) and Michelle Duchesne (history teacher)

Ideas

"It's by talking to colleagues about what we do in class that these ideas emerge," Deschambault emphasized. This is not the first such experience for her and her colleague, history teacher Nathalie Duchesne. A few months earlier, before the end-of-term history examination, the two teachers decided to plan an activity together to help students review for the exam. They prepared an interactive, oral activity in English, based on the history notions studied. The students had to make connections between various elements from the time of the Egyptian Pharaohs and to justify their answers. "It was like a game, because they earned points for each correct answer," Deschambault explained. "I even saw some students open their history books to check their answer and prove their point. They were so drawn in by the game, they almost forgot that it was an exercise! It took us only about 20 minutes to prepare the activity. We intend to do it again before the next exam."

And that's only the beginning. "These two projects really reassured me," admitted Duchesne. "I realized that you don't necessarily have to invest a lot of time and energy to prepare interesting and relevant activities. We experimented using small ideas, and it was a great success! We're planning others. Now that we know it's possible, we'll go a bit further each time."

The two activities described are available on the Web site of SPEAQ
<**www.speaq.qc.ca/act_sec1_eng.html**>
under "Concept Map" and "History-ESL."

"It's by talking to colleagues about what we do in class that these ideas emerge," Deschambault emphasized.

By Eve Krakow

Entrepreneurship in action

Students Start Their Own Businesses

Wait, there's one detail we forgot to mention: Ryan is just 12 years old.

Snacks 'R' Us is one of six companies created by Grade 6 students at Mary Gardner Elementary School (New Frontiers School Board) in Châteauguay. These young entrepreneurs weren't just playing store: each company had to prepare a business plan, meet with investors, and develop, produce and market its products to other students in the school. On February 1, they held a bilingual press conference, attended by Global TV and local media, to present their hard work.

Process

The project was spearheaded by Julie Provencher, an Elementary Cycle Three teacher. "I'd been wanting to do this for a long time, but it's a huge undertaking, so I couldn't do it alone." This year, with the support of the principal, several teachers and school technicians—and community partners—the project came together.

To start off, all Grade 6 students submitted ideas for creating a company; the teachers chose the six best. Then, students wrote up their résumés and applied to work in the company of their choice. Each student went for an interview—conducted in English and French—and was awarded a position in the company: president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, marketing director, notary, public relations director, timekeeper or human resources director. Then, within each company, students designed a logo, developed a code of ethics, participated in meetings following an agenda, and worked together to make and sell their products.

Students had specific tasks according to their position. For example, the marketing directors had to come up with marketing strategies to promote their company's product; the human resources director had to resolve group conflicts; the treasurer had to keep the accounting book up to date and track the company's debits and credits; the notary had to make sure company rules and procedures were observed.

"What's great about this project is that it gives each child a chance to be part of something," said the school principal, Joseph Urvotich.

Julie Provencher, Elementary Cycle Three teacher and project leader

This project ties in perfectly with the principles of the education reform.

The company presidents at the students' press conference

What students said

Students said they learned a lot about how a company works. "The hardest part was choosing prices," said Victoria, public relations director for Book Bug, which sells activity books. "At first, we were selling our activity book for $2.50, but no one was buying it. So we kept bringing the price down. Now it's $1.00, and people are buying it."

Christina, president of S.C.A.D. (Special Cards and Decorations), said she learned about the value of teamwork. "If you try doing things all by yourself, it doesn't work. You have to be a group."

She and Victoria agreed that teamwork was also the aspect they enjoyed the most. "I liked working with people in groups," said Victoria. "And even though Christina and I weren't in the same company, we shared ideas and talked about problems and solutions."

Evaluating competencies

Julie Provencher says this entrepreneurial project ties in perfectly with the principles of the education reform, and integrates a number of subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies.

"I've been evaluating with competencies for a few years, but I often find it vague and difficult," said the teacher. "But this project is based in real life, and it's much easier to evaluate competencies in real-life situations." For example, the marketing directors of the companies had to present their business idea to potential investors in the community. "I can't think of a better application of *to communicate appropriately*."

What students did not know at the press conference was that they'd soon be entering Phase II of the project. Provencher explained that the two Grade 6 classes are organized into Ministries (Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Finance, etc.). "In Phase II of the project, the companies will be taxed. The money will go back to the population, i.e. the class." She noted that this ties into the broad area of learning Citizenship and Community Life, and that it would likely take place just as students' parents would be preparing their income tax returns.

A final word

At the press conference, after the public relations directors and company presidents had each spoken, the floor was opened to questions. One person asked Ashley, president of Super D, if she thought their company would ever be bigger than Super C.

"Well, if our sales continue, and we continue to get more customers, then one day we may be bigger," she replied smiling.

The companies

Snacks 'R' Us
Sells snacks at lunchtime and on special days

House of Bling
Sells homemade jewelry

Game Station
Rents out games to play during lunchtime

S.C.A.D.
Sells special cards and decorations

Super D
Sells party items: loot bags, invitations, balloons, etc.

Book Bug
Sells activity books, used books, comic books

Target market

Students of all ages at Mary Gardner School

Company goal

To raise money for an end-of-year field trip

A few of the entrepreneurs. From the left, 2nd and 4th respectively: Virginie and Christina.

The students are also entering their projects in the Québec Entrepreneurship Contest. Visit: **www.concours-entrepreneur.org**

By Eve Krakow

Twin Oaks Pilots Early Literacy Intervention Programs

The "Sessions" programs—Intensive Intervention, Explicit Teaching in Reading (ETIR), and Accelerated Development in Reading (ADOR)—combine traditional and modern approaches, teaching children specific strategies for decoding and finding meaning, and taking into consideration the psychology of learning.

"The programs have been very successful in our school so far," said Judy Freedman, principal of Twin Oaks Elementary School. "In the past, we were not as successful in our remediation of children who were having reading problems."

Originally developed in French by education consultant Christian Boyer, the programs are based on extensive research on learning and literacy. "In the last 10-20 years, research on brain and child development and on best practices for learning have led us to better understand what we need to do to help children learn," Freedman explained. She adds that the program ties in with the principles of the Québec education reform by focusing on lifelong skills and competencies. "We've already seen the effects flowing into other subjects, such as mathematics."

Intensive Intervention is a 10-week intervention that provides direct support to a small group of 10 to 12 students. The main objective of the ADOR program is to encourage early breakthrough and development of reading skills by all students within the first 60 days of a school year. It emphasizes phonological awareness, although reasoning, comprehension and decoding skills are taught simultaneously. ETIR builds on the skills learned in ADOR, further developing reading abilities such as analyzing questions, formulating hypotheses, creating links between information and drawing inferences about the text.

The programs are part of the Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier School Board's strategic goal to provide early intervention support in literacy. But while a number of schools have implemented the Intensive

Judy Freedman, principal, with Elementary Cycle One teachers Annie Cadorin, Rita Di Gennaro, Amelia Pompeo, Mia Pompeo, Elaine Langlois and Sonya Cinti

Intervention program, Twin Oaks is one of just two schools piloting the ADOR and ETIR programs (the other is Souvenir Elementary School in Chomedey). Twin Oaks began the ADOR program last year in Grade 1, and has now added ETIR in Grade 2. Intensive Intervention is carried out as needed.

In Annie Coderre's Cycle One classroom, the children sit at their desks with their binders open, responding to questions about a story they have just read. "What do we do first?" Coderre asks. "Read the statement," the children reply, loudly and in unison. The teacher and the children read the statement on the board together: "Marc is (a) younger than Lori. Marc is (b) older than Lori. Marc is (c) the same age as Lori." Then she asks, "What do we do next?" "Choose a surf word!" the students all reply. First they decide on "Lori," then change their minds and choose "Marc." Working individually, the children find the appropriate passage in their text and place their finger on it; the teacher goes around to see what they've chosen. The passage is: "Marc is happy when his sister baby-sits him." From this, the students deduce that Marc is younger than Lori. The class continues through the steps of the process together: they choose their answer, reread the statement and verify their answer.

This is Coderre's second year with the ADOR program. "I love it," she said. "The children's progress is amazing." She finds it more effective than other techniques she's tried in her 10 years of teaching. "There's a lot of rote and repetition, and it's extremely structured. We teach kids how to think, instead of assuming they know [these strategies]. Everything is done out loud—very loud—so even though the kids are sitting at their desks, they're active and involved."

Aimee Parsons, a Cycle One teacher and resource teacher, is equally enthusiastic. "It's very hands-on. At the beginning kids get to touch things, to pull out letters—it's very physical. Then they move into books and learn how to sit at their desks. It creates a smooth transition from kindergarten."

Both teachers say the techniques differ from what they originally learned about teaching. For example, in the Sessions programs, the teachers call on individual children constantly. "But they're so used to it now, it's not a problem," said Parsons. A teacher might begin reading a text and call on a child to read the next few words, then continue reading, then call on anther child. If the child can't read a word, they "cut the word," which means to sound it out, referring to sound boxes pasted on their desk, if needed.

Another example is the reward system: students are rewarded for appropriate responses and behaviour, using paper clips or coloured sheets of paper. At the end of the week, they can exchange these clips or papers for prizes. Later on, students are awarded points as a group. Parsons recalls that when her school started the program, one teacher had opted out of the paper clip system. But she eventually came back to it. "After just a few days, you could really see the difference [in behaviour] between her class and the other classes."

"We teach the children how to think, instead of assuming they know these strategies," said Annie Coderre.

By Pascale Sauvé

Intensive English

"It was in 1990 that the staff and parents of students at six schools in the Commission scolaire de Montréal chose to embark on this adventure," recalled Panetta. "I was one of the first to teach intensive English." It marked the beginning of an incredible experience. Fifteen years later, the school board's intensive ESL project has taken flight, spreading to dozens of schools. "There was always a strong demand for this program. It's very popular," added Panetta, who remains as committed and enthusiastic as ever.

At Ahuntsic elementary school, where Panetta teaches, about one hundred students participate in the program. They devote five months to intensive English and five months to their regular academic studies. "We used to offer the program to students in Grade 6 only," she said. "This year, we have a new program that starts in Grade 5. These students will therefore enjoy two years of intensive English, for a total of ten months." Panetta is delighted by this initiative. "At the end of a session with my students, I would always tell myself that I would have liked to have had more time with them. It was my dream. Now, I'll get to accompany my students for two years. A specialist rarely has the opportunity to get to know their students so well. I'm really lucky to experience this!"

The new program did, of course, require some adaptations, but Panetta was eager to meet this new challenge. "I reworked the program that we had, in particular by choosing themes that would be better suited to the age of the children. Because I quickly realized that there was a difference in maturity between students in Grade 5 and students in Grade 6. But they learn just as fast! Five months later, if I compare the two age groups, their pace of learning is the same."

During these five months with the students, Panetta teaches only English. "We work on the three competencies of the ESL program," she explained. "In intensive English, we can work in depth, because we have more time." From the beginning, Panetta has developed her own instructional materials. "Not a lot of materials have been designed for intensive English," she noted. "We have to do it ourselves. When we started 15 years ago, all the intensive English teachers would meet regularly to discuss what was going on in our classrooms and to share our activities. When you start out, it's not easy being the only one in your school doing what you're doing. Now, there are two intensive English teachers at the school. We work together; we share our discoveries and our ideas."

Always seeking to stay fresh, Panetta continues to innovate year after year. "I often get my inspiration from topics and activities in instructional materials designed for regular classes, and adapt them to develop projects. You get to draw on whatever you find, and then take it a step further." However, in light of the intensive English program's popularity, the teachers now have access to some projects designed for them specifically. "A few teachers were given release time to develop learning and evaluation situations for intensive English," Panetta explained. "They're beautiful projects, all written out and integrated, and in keeping with the reform. I'm absolutely thrilled!"

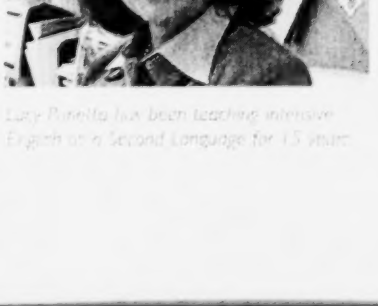
This year alone, her students have completed about ten projects. "We've always worked this way (by project) in intensive English," she explained. "For many of us, it wasn't difficult to adapt to the reform. Obviously, some aspects are different. We don't develop our projects exactly the same way. They must be student-centred and meaningful to the children. Personally, I find these new ways of doing things extraordinary!"

"When I learned French as a second language, we just did exercises," Panetta recalled. "We never spoke! Today, the students are stimulated, encouraged and motivated. The classroom is never quiet; they're always talking, moving and working in teams. It's wonderful! I'd love to be a student today to have this experience."

Resources

Our Olympic Challenge
Learning and evaluation situation for intensive English
http://SPEAQ.qc.ca/act_int4_eng.html

ePals Global Network
Student correspondence and exchange service
http://www.epals.com



Lucy Panetta has been teaching intensive English as a Second Language for 15 years.

The Ministère's Action Plan on Reading in School

And What Are You Reading?

On January 14, a five-year action plan on reading in school was announced focusing on the enjoyment and discovery of books; this action plan comes with a $60-million investment in school libraries over three years.

MEASURE 1

Actions to foster student involvement:

- **Contests** to instill in young people a love of reading

MEASURE 2

Actions to support schools:

- a **toolbox**
- a **literary camp**
- a **conference**

A partnership so that elementary and secondary students will:

- enjoy reading
- read more and make greater use of books
- make reading a part of their lives

MEASURE 3

Actions to increase access to varied and organized literary and documentary resources:

- **support** for acquisitions
- **connections** to the complementary educational services reference framework and the QEP
- **distribution** of effective organizational models of school libraries

MEASURE 4

Actions to reinforce the positive influence of parents, the educational community and cultural organizations on children's reading habits:

- **promotion activities** connecting the school, parents and the educational community (in particular, through *Montréal, World Book Capital City 2005*)

You can find documents about the action planon the Web site of the Ministère:
www.meq.gouv.qc.ca

Visit this site regularly to keep up to date on how these actions will be implemented. Information on the contests and literary camp will also be posted.

NEW ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER

On February 2, the Cabinet named Pierre Bergevin assistant deputy minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education. Bergevin is no stranger to the education community in Québec. He worked for more than 35 years within the Commission scolaire de Montréal (formerly the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal), as a teacher, a school principal, director of educational services and later, director general.

In his relations with school representatives since taking on his new duties, Mr. Bergevin has demonstrated a strong commitment to the education reform. He has stated his intention to continue the work that has already begun, and to take the necessary steps to ensure that the building blocks for the major changes planned for secondary school are implemented successfully.

We welcome Mr. Bergevin to the Ministère and offer him our full collaboration in carrying out his mandate and his mission, which is also our own: to foster success for the greatest number of young people.

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE AND NEEDS OF EDUCATION 2003-2004

In January, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation published its annual report on the state and needs of education for the year 2003-2004, entitled *Career Training: Promoting the Value of All Paths*. It stresses the need to pursue the development of the career training sector in a systematic way to ensure that all Quebeckers can acquire the qualifications that will enable them to join the labour force and progress throughout their professional lives.

For more information, visit the Web site of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation: <**www.cse.qc.ca**>.

PROVINCIAL HUB FOR TEACHER INDUCTION

As of spring 2005, new teachers will have access to the Carrefour national pour l'insertion professionnelle en enseignement (CNIPE), a provincial hub for teacher induction.

CNIPE services will be developed according to professional development proposals, examples of welcoming kits, existing programs, various pilot projects as well as the results of university research. This hub will facilitate communication among people interested in building and investing in the area of teacher induction in Québec. People will also be able to sign up for cyber-mentoring, and consult a list of educators interested in sharing their knowledge and experience or providing information. A place for meeting and coordination, the CNIPE will be available to everyone working in schools and school boards and will be moderated, managed and updated on a regular basis.

This hub is taking shape as an innovative way to provide guidance to new teachers, offer various kinds of support, allow for sharing and mutual help and ensure a presence. Anyone who is new to teaching, who works in education, who is interested in teacher induction in Québec or who simply wants to be informed can become a user and, eventually, even participate as a partner.

If you have any questions, you may contact <**llamoureux@cslaval.qc.ca**>.

Visit the Web site of the Carrefour national pour l'insertion professionnelle (CNIPE) at: <**www.insertion.qc.ca**>.

SCHOOLSCAPES
WORKING TOGETHER TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

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